

"Green" Pediatric Dentistry

By Dr. Purvi Zavery, DDS, MS

After many years of thinking about it, I finally decided to start my own pediatric dental practice in May 2009. While working at other dental practices and visiting numerous dental offices, I got an opportunity to see how other dentists have built their offices. From the beginning, I wanted to make sure my new office was kid-friendly, state-of-the-art, utilized the latest innovations in pediatric dentistry, and was "green." The first three items were doable, but building and operating a "green" dental office required lots of planning, patience, and additional time and money. I was willing to make the extra effort to ensure I achieved my goal since I firmly believed that this could make a big difference in the lives of the children I would be treating.

You may be asking, "What is a 'green' dentist?" To me, it is about providing optimal dental care in an environmentally friendly way. In a typical dental office there are many things that a dentist can do to make the office environmentally friendly and conserve our precious resources. There are also many things a dentist can do during the construction of a dental office to make it "green."

Working with a leading architect (Mohsen Ghoreishi from Kohan and Associates), I started designing the office to use recycled and environmentally friendly material during the construction phase. A few examples of things we did:

- Made sure the general contractor recycled all debris from the demolition of the existing office
- Flooring and cabinetry made of recycled material
- Low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint for the walls
- Ultra-efficient lights with low power consumption
- Smartly designed ventilation system to reduce heating

and cooling needs

- Incorporated sensor-based lights and sensor-based faucets
- Eco-friendly TVs and monitors from Samsung and Vizio which reduces power consumption by 40%
- As part of the construction design, we also picked dental equipment that could have a positive impact on the environment. Some of the decisions we made:
- Use of a dry vacuum vs. a traditional water-based vacuum. A dry vacuum can save 500 gallons of water per day in a typical dental office!
- Steam-based surgical sterilization unit vs. a chemical-based sterilization unit. This not only helps the environment by eliminating harmful chemical residue that pollutes our environment but also eliminates a patient's exposure to these harmful chemicals.

- For the x-ray system, we decided to go with an all-digital imaging system that does not use chemicals and also reduces a patient's radiation exposure by 90%. Since all the x-ray images are digital, there is no need to develop them using harmful chemicals hence preventing any contamination of water with lead.

In terms of daily operations, the office is designed as a totally digital office, including:

- Computer-based patient management system as well as digital charting and imaging so no need for any paper-based charts or forms.
- Use of electronic insurance filing system eliminating the need to mail insurance claims and reducing paper usage.
- Mercury-free office so no silver fillings are placed and only white composites are used. By not using mercury

fillings the need for mercury disposal is reduced helping to protect the environment from harmful effects of mercury.

- Selected a Web site hosting company (1and1.com) that is an EPA certified Clean Energy User eliminating 30,000 tons of CO₂ emissions per year.

There are many other things we do on a daily basis to make sure we are environmentally friendly while meeting the primary goal of providing excellent dental care to children. I believe this "green" journey is just a start for us and there are many more things we can do to reduce the harmful affect on the environment. My plan is to continue improving the office practices and finding new ways to preserve our environment for our children so they can have a lifetime of healthy smiles.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any information on "green" dentistry or have questions related to children's dentistry.

Dr. Purvi Zavery, DDS, MS, is a pediatric dentist providing comprehensive dental care for infants, children, teens, and patients with special needs. She received her DDS from University of the Pacific Dental School and completed a three year residency program on pediatrics at UCSF. For more information visit www.PeninsulaKidsDDS.com or contact her at drzavery@PeninsulaKidsDDS.com.

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